

Six a.m., 145 West 78th Street, Manhattan

The heat of two bodies grinding together in passionate, sweaty sex wasn't even off the sheets before Bruce pushed out of bed and headed for the coffeemaker. Rory watched her boyfriend walk across her studio apartment. *He looks great naked. Cute butt.* She stared at him until he turned around.

"I can feel your eyes," he said, leaning against the counter as the coffee dripped.

"Can I help it if I love your bod?" *Why don't you come over here and feel something else? Oh, wait. You already did.*

He chuckled at the compliment. "I guess since I've got it, I might as well flaunt it."

Gorgeous—yes. Humble—no. She smiled as her gaze roamed over him.

"Don't you have dogs to walk?" He cocked an eyebrow at her.

"Yeah. Gotta be ready by eight. Come on, Baxter," she called to her pug, who had gone back to sleep after the activity on the bed was over.

"Lazy dog," Bruce muttered.

"I heard that. He did too." Also naked, she padded over to join him. Bruce slapped her gently on the rear before he headed to the bathroom. Rory slipped on a short, pink, terry robe. "Don't make it too hot," she called.

"No time to share with you today. Early meeting."

She took a big breath, pushed some rye bread down in the toaster, and yawned. Baxter finally got up and stretched on the sofa bed before heading for the dog stairs. He ambled down and strolled toward the kitchen. Rory bent to scratch him behind the ears before she gave him fresh water. Then, she mixed dry and wet food for her dog's breakfast. Bruce joined her again, clad only in a towel tucked in at the waist.

"You don't need to cover up. I've already seen you naked. Like a thousand times."

"Habit," he replied, pouring coffee for himself.

"Hey," she said, pointing to her empty mug sitting next to his.

"Oh, yeah. Sure." He filled hers too. They sat at the little table, munching on toast.

"I brought the *Times* help wanted ads for you." He reached down and pulled newspaper clippings out of his briefcase.

"I'm already employed."

Bruce raised his eyebrows. “Oh?”

“I walk dogs and write mysteries.”

“Time to grow up, Rory, and get a real job.”

“These are real jobs.”

He made a dismissive noise with his lips and turned his gaze to his food.

No respect for me, for dogs. Hates Baxter. What am I doing with him? Great sex? Oh, yeah.

“I make a lotta money since my promotion. You’ve got to keep up. You’re always broke. When are you going to take *me* to dinner?”

“I cook at home for you.”

“It’s not the same.” He took a bite of bread.

“I’m making your favorite tonight—chili.”

He smiled. “Guess I’ll be here, then.” She reached out and touched his smooth, freshly-shaven cheek. His blond hair was parted neatly, and his blue eyes looked at her coolly. “But then I have some work to do.”

“Nookie, eat, and run?”

Bruce nodded, taking a sip of the hot brew. He ran his fingers down the lapel of her robe then dipped them under the material. Pushing the cloth out of the way, he grazed his thumb over her breast before cupping it. He stared at her bare flesh. “You’re beautiful.” He bent to kiss her bosom.

“Wish you could stay for round two.” She ran her hand over the terrycloth that barely concealed his budding erection.

“Me too.” His eyes glistened with desire. “But hold it until tonight. We’ll do it before I have to work.”

“Guess I can live with that. I can write tonight, then, after you leave.”

He pulled her to him for a passionate kiss.

“Or I could take care of that now.” She touched him while whispering in his ear.

Color suffused his cheeks. He pushed to his feet and grabbed his clothes. “Don’t tempt me. I have to go home and change. Can’t go into the office dressed in these.”

“Wall Street doesn’t like wrinkles?” She smiled.

“It’s serious business down there, Rory. Money business. No joking around.”

You don't have a sense of humor, either. Too serious. If you weren't so good in bed... Before she could finish her thought, Bruce was dressed and heading for the door. She closed her robe and tied the sash before following him.

When he put his hand on the knob, he turned to her. "A real job. Start looking today, Rory. Make something of yourself."

He kissed her and was gone before she could utter a defense. She flopped down on the bed, hiding her face in the pillow. *Why do I always feel so shitty after Bruce leaves? Is the sex worth it? Some days, yes, some days, no.* Baxter climbed back up on the bed. She turned toward him and received several wet pug kisses. *At least Baxter loves me the way I am.*